



Nagoya Writes!

Patterns
2008

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Message from the Editor

by Ernest Schaal

This “Patterns” issue was almost the issue that never was. Originally, this issue was supposed to be published last year.

We tried to have co-editors of prose. Unfortunately, one of the prose editors went back to the States without doing any work, and the other prose editor procrastinated and eventually quit without forwarding to me the prose that was submitted. By the time that we got some of the prose entries resubmitted, the editor of the poetry had serious computer problems and lost the poetry entries, so we had to request resubmission of the poetry.

Despite all that, I am pleased with the product that we produced. I am particularly pleased with Sarah Mulvey’s “In The Night, She Comes To Me,” which I consider one of her best pieces of work. I am also particularly pleased with Albert Sussler’s “The 100 Yen Cup.”

Enjoy.

The cover photo and all other photos are by *Joe Kashi*.

Stories

Alphaed and Bonoboed

by Tom Bauerle

Cosmo Doria decided that he was handicapped. It was the only explanation he could come up with for the reoccurring series of disasters he had perpetuated upon himself. It wasn't his fault that he had been sent out into the modern angst-ridden jungle without the proper tools for survival. All his life he'd felt as if he'd been dropped into the snake pit, forced to face down hissing poison spitting king cobras while armed with stunted broken fangs and not an ounce of venom with which to defend himself. He seemed to be forever expected to deal with flight or fight situations with his legs hobbled and no weapons of combat at his disposal.

He blamed his family. They had abused him from earliest childhood with promises of his potentiality. They had deviously raised him in a home full of warmth and compassion, had told him every day that he was loved and that he was a member of a vast caring universe that rewarded good and punished evil; they had assured him that virtue was its own reward, that honesty, compassion and truth would guide him all the days of his life. They had told him that True Love conquers everything. And for that last lie alone, Cosmo thought, the wimpy bastards should rot in hell.

How dare they make him believe in himself and the basic goodness of other people? They might as well have just castrated him at puberty. For they had instilled in him a set of involuntary conditioned mental responses that set up the lifelong pattern of his suffering.

Cosmo had done well enough early on. His body was large and strong, his face not unattractive, his mind eager and curious, his interest in and love for his fellow humans boundless. At first, Cosmo began to prosper. He made friends easily. He loved and loved well, with all his heart and soul. He married his childhood sweet heart. He got a good job writing copy for a prestigious advertising firm. He worked hard and saved his money. He expressed his love for his wife on a daily basis. He called her at lunchtime to make sure she wasn't lonely. He brought her flowers for no reason at all. He moved ever toward his shining destiny, buoyed up by the power of positive thinking and a pure heart.

And then he was blind-sided by the Assholes.

He came home unexpectedly early one day to find his wife in bed with one of his drinking buddies. The one who always called women "cunts" and bragged about how he loved to "fuck the shit out of them." Two days later Cosmo lost his job because the president of the company had embezzled all its funds, including the employees' salaries and retirement benefits, and had run off with his eighteen-year-old secretary. Rumor had it they were living on a houseboat in the Cayman Islands. They were living the lives of pirates on the open seas while everyone else drowned in the wake they left behind them.

Then Cosmo moved to Japan for several reasons. The most obvious one was to get as far away from Muncie Indiana, the place of his betrayal and humiliation, and Japan was just about dead center on the other side of the world. He had also heard that Japan was a land where people treated each other with dignity and respect. The books he had read about Zen

Buddhism before he had come there had further convinced him that it was a place where he could find some new direction to take his life.

Cosmo took to this new exotic country with the joyous passion of a religious convert. He got a fairly well-paying job teaching classes in *Writing in English and American Culture* at a private university. He studied the martial art of *Aikido*, and reveled in its spiritual goals of stopping violence and living in harmony with the world. He memorized his *Aikido sensei's* speeches on accepting even your enemies with a "pure heart." He loved the way the Japanese showed politeness and courtesy, and how the shopkeepers and pub owners bowed and welcomed you, their valued customer, into the tiny domains of their places of business. He was chased down and caught by a heartbreakingly cute young Japanese girl who brought him presents, gave him massages in the *ofuro* bath at night and wrote poems to him in broken English.

And then he came home one day to find his *Aikido sensei* in bed with his girl friend.

Cosmo spent a lot of time alone now in his wooden house communing with his bewilderment. He was particularly at a loss to understand exactly why and in what manner he kept getting things wrong. As far as he knew, he had always acted correctly, yet, in the long run, his honesty and sincerity had not been of any help, nor has it been valued or appreciated by those to whom it had been directed. He watched a lot of cable TV. Since his Japanese was limited, he particularly favored the English speaking programs. His favorite shows were on the *History* and *Discovery* Channels.

Cosmo began to observe the actions of those around him in order to get a handle on the mysteries of the human condition. Cosmo began to keep copious notes to organize his thoughts and observations. By far the thickest and most well worn notebook in his collection was entitled *The Triumph and Dominance of the Asshole*.

The latest entry went like this:

No one knows exactly why God created Assholes. But it is certain that, after the Deity made the first one, patted him together out of dinosaur dung and clay, God must have looked upon him with wide-eyed wonder and been mightily pleased. God must have been supremely smitten with his nasty little creation because he then proceeded to make so damn many of them.

And as further proof of Gods' favoritism, not only did He see to it that His little Asshole Children grew and prospered, but he gave them so many advantages over the rest of the population that he virtually insured their ultimate victory in the struggle for domination of the universe.

To begin with, Assholes have much more confidence than the rest of us. They are fanatical front line soldiers in a personality cult of One: namely, themselves. This gives them a dedication, sense of purpose and an iron will that rolls like a juggernaut over anything that opposes them. They are better organized and singularly directed. My parents had been right when they told me to believe in the Power of Positive thinking. What they had neglected to tell me, however, was that, like fire, lipstick and strontium 90, it was a tool that could be used for the purposes of both Good and Evil. The Power of

Positive Thinking is the major weapon in the Asshole arsenal. No one is more sure of his right to succeed than a bully, a tyrant, a racist, a Nazi.

This belief in the correctness of their vision gives the Assholes a sense of peace and harmony with the universe that produces an upright posture of self-assurance, a healthy glow to the skin and a rascally glint to the eye. Self-centered people tend to look better, talk louder and more to the point, and they always dress to kill. Isn't it true, one must ask himself, that the people that ultimately do the most harm in the world--the politicians, lawyers, religious leaders, the military, the embezzlers and CEOs--always wear the most expensive suits? Class and Conviction. The Assholes have both coming out their, well, out their assholes.

But the most devastating attribute of the Asshole is his energy, his relentlessness that keeps him driving toward his goal of domination without rest, without giving any quarter or mercy to anyone or anything that gets in his way. Assholes play to win. They keep their eyes on the prize and, even more importantly, they deny the right of anyone else to the prize except themselves.

It was no contest at all, really. Whereas I had been taught to "love thy neighbor as thyself," the Assholes overwhelm everyone with a chorus of, "love ME! Love MEEEE!"

I had been brought up to be modest, humble and self-effacing and the Assholes were more than willing to help out and humble and humiliate me every time gave they saw the slightest chance.

What then, should I do?

Cosmo stopped writing and tried to organize his thoughts. For the thousandth time he replayed the past in his head to try and understand what he had been doing wrong. All his life, Cosmo had tried to come to his fellow human beings with understanding and the belief that people are basically good deep down inside. He had loved with his whole heart open and unafraid and the Assholes had seen an exposed target and sent in their best-trained snipers to blow it away with point blank fire.

Early on in life, Cosmo had striven mightily to raise himself above the corruption he saw around him. He read the great religious works of the world and decided that Buddhism had the answer. He would meditate. He would become a vegetarian. No animal or sentient being would ever suffer because of him. He would walk lightly upon the earth and harm no one. He would become a Great Soul that would send ripples of compassion out into the world like a lotus petal dropping softly onto the surface of a smooth pristine pond.

The second month into his vegetarian diet, his body was hit with relentless bouts of diarrhea. Then his muscles began to cramp and his vision blurred.

Then he discovered the book *The Secret Life of Plants*. Cosmo was aghast to learn that plants had feelings, too. That they were sentient beings that were very aware of everything going on around them, that their systolic pressure raised when their fellow plants were slaughtered in their presence. That even endives and lettuces screamed when you picked them

to make a garden-fresh salad. What, then was the difference between eating a leaf of lettuce and eating a pig? They both suffered, they both died.

Cosmo didn't know what to do. How was it possible to live without causing suffering in this world? If even vegetables felt pain and anguish, how was he to conduct himself in a peaceful manner? He couldn't stop eating, as suicide was considered to be one of the greatest of all sins. He began to study the lives of the Great Souls throughout history to see how they had conducted themselves. He soon learned that the great sage Mahatmas Gandhi had slept naked every night with his two young nieces and washed his eyes every morning with his own urine. Saint Francis had strutted around bare-assed naked whenever he wanted to piss off the local townsfolk of Assisi and peace maker Martin Luther King had cheated on his wife for most of the years he had been alive. John F. Kennedy had helped kill Marylyn Monroe and his brother Bobby and his wife had gulped down LSD on a regular basis to clear out their heads. Guatama Buddha had spent his early years screwing his brains out in his harem and had abandoned his wife and child to go be a monk.

His on-going attempt to understand the nature of humanity had led Cosmo to Darwin and the theories of Evolution and Natural selection. More recent research in this area showed that scientists now believe that more than one group of intelligent, up-right walking, tool-using hominids descended from our ape-like ancestors. Some of them appeared to have been gentle and benign, existing on a diet of only plants, roots and berries. They had walked lightly and up-rightly upon the earth until our much more aggressive ancestors annihilated them from existence. And so the pattern was established that has lasted to this day.

Cosmos' private research led him to read up on the field of genetics and heredity and he soon discovered that perhaps the closest relatives we humans have living today is the chimpanzee. In fact, we humans are made up of 95% of the same DNA as our banana-loving cousins.

Cosmo saw a small window of light opening at the far end of his darkness. Cute, cuddly chimpanzees, the same furry little clowns that mugged at us on children's shows, one of the few animals that also have the ability to laugh, are very, very much like us. Perhaps by understanding the comical chimp, Cosmo could get a better insight into the original, purer, more natural, less scheming nature of humans.

One day while Cosmo was relaxing at home, TV remote control in his hand, he channel-surfed into a documentary on the *Animal Planet Network*. It told a story about a certain patch of jungle in Africa which was divided in half by the mighty Congo River. On one side lives a large group of Chimpanzees. On the other side lives a family of monkeys that are very closely related to the Chimpanzees. These monkeys are called Bonobos. Bonobo monkeys live in a very closely-knit, well ordered society. Their clan is matriarchal, and the females adopt every Bonobo baby as their own, helping each other to raise their offspring so that every Bonobo baby has as many mothers as there are females in the clan. Bonobos are the great lovers and whores of the animal kingdom. They never fight, never show any sign of violence toward one another. Instead they have sex. Any dispute, any disagreement is settled by the act of fucking. And the Bonobos do it with anyone and everyone. Bonobos are perfectly at home mounting their own mates as well as everyone else's: fathers jump on daughters, as well as their own sons, brothers bonk sisters, aunts, uncles, and any nearby strangers. Mothers don't hesitate to get connubial with anyone who's upset and in need of a

cuddle. And so Bonobo society continues on in an atmosphere of peace and harmony and free love.

But not for very much longer. For, the Bonobos are endangered. This small patch of jungle in the Congo is the very last place they will ever be seen in the wild before they become extinct.

On the other side of the river live many tribes of Chimpanzees. The Chimpanzees don't believe in free love. In fact, the only male who gets to mate in Chimpanzee society is the all-powerful Alpha Male. The Alpha Male becomes all-powerful by mercilessly crushing any other male who opposes him. Since only the Alpha gets to fuck, the incentive to victory is stupendous. When a new Alpha Male takes over from an old one, he immediately proceeds to kill off all of the baby Chimps that were the offspring of the defeated king. Fully one fourth of all Chimp babies are massacred by the Alpha Male of their group.

These, our closest cousins, the Chimpanzees not only know how to laugh, but they are perhaps the only animal species that conducts warfare as we humans know it. Researchers were recently dismayed to discover that Chimps not only often are carnivorous, but are capable of very complicated battlefield strategies against their enemy apes, including massed troop movements involving flanking attacks, feints and well thought-out ambushes. When a chimp from another family group invades their space, they go to war. They track him down, kill and cannibalize him. They eat of the flesh of any stranger they can catch. They are perhaps one of the most violent asshole-ridden societies in the entire animal kingdom. And they are our very closest relatives.

There used to be more Bonobos, but the Chimps have killed most of them off. The only reason this last group of sex-loving monkeys exists is that their enemy Chimps are held at bay by the mighty Congo River. But every day the Chimp scouts stalk the banks of the river searching for a way across.

As the documentary finished, Cosmo sat staring mutely at a commercial for a new laundry detergent. The host shouted commandingly for his studio audience to watch as he threw a pristine white shirt into a glass bowl of water and then dumped in ink and black berry juice to stain it. The crowd gasped as the host pulled a cup of ox blood from beneath the table and added that as well. They shuddered as he held the foul looking liquid aloft for them to get a closer look. The host then sprinkled in a packet of his magic product and made a sorcerer's pass in the air with his hands. He swirled the contents of the bowl around, once, twice with his fingers and the crowd shouted out its joy when the water turned crystal clear to reveal a shining white shirt within. The host cried out in triumph and bowed low as the crowd surged forward pocket books in hand, howling their devotion to the host and his product, ready to pay any price the host asked.

Cosmo changed channels. This one was a comedy show that featured a tall handsome-looking comic who continually slapped the head of a short fat goofy-looking man in glasses every time he said something stupid, which seemed to be all of the time. Cosmo turned off the TV.

And so Cosmo sat on in despair.

"Here I am," he thought. "And here we are."

And, he concluded, so the pattern goes on. Our 95% Chimp DNA compels us to Asshole behavior unique to our own species. We can't help our little monkey selves from

trooping around the one who pounds his chest, shakes his dick in our face, and screams for our attention. In any social gathering, we rush to be near the one who speaks the loudest and does the most posturing. We say he has “charisma.” Girls love the Bad Boys, men gather around the Queen Bee. We love our Alphas deeply and are more than happy to follow anyone who is so sure of what he is doing that he feels he has the right to tell everyone else what to do as well. We are programmed to compete with each other and win, but if we can’t win, we make sure we back the winning side. We gather in tribes and threaten our neighbors. We take what we can. It is in our DNA to love the taste of blood, to run our enemies to the ground, to ambush them, and eat them whole.

Cosmo took a lengthy walk outside his house to buy some food at the super market. On his way he passed a park where five teen-age boys stood in a circle around a smaller boy in a Japanese junior high school uniform. The smaller boy lay on the ground while the other five kicked him repeatedly and laughed at his cries of protest. Cosmo rushed forward to tell them to stop, but they grabbed the younger boy’s backpack and ran off with it before he could reach them. When he bent down to help the boy up, the boy took one look at Cosmo’s *gaijin* face and ran away screaming.

The lines were long at the super market. Three people cut in line ahead of Cosmo, pushing aside the other carts and standing there daring any one to do anything about it. Cosmo’s bags were heavy, so he rode the subway the one stop back to his home. As he got on, he saw a drunken salary man push two old ladies aside to grab the last available seat. At the next stop, a young couple got on, the woman obviously very pregnant. There were no seats open, not even a ceiling strap for them to hold on to. The train lurched around a corner and the woman faltered and grabbed on to her husband for support.

Cosmo sent a withering stare at the seated salary man and nodded his head toward the pregnant woman hoping he would get the hint and offer her his seat. The salary man looked at the floor and pretended to be asleep. The pregnant woman let out a low moan. She was obviously in trouble. She held tightly to her husband as her knees began to buckle.

Cosmo prodded the salary man’s leg with his foot. The salary man grunted impatiently and closed his eyes even more tightly shut. The pregnant woman went limp and collapsed onto the floor. She had passed out either from fatigue or the crush of the crowd. Her husband guided her down as gently as he could and bent over her rubbing her wrists and patting her face. “*Daijobu? Daijobu?*” He asked repeatedly. “Are you all right? Are you all right?”

Cosmo glanced at the salary man to see that he had his eyes pressed even more tightly together than before, refusing to even look at the young woman sprawled helplessly at his feet.

Cosmo felt a deep reverberating growling sound coming from his throat. Before he knew what he was doing, he had leapt at the salary man, lifted him bodily from his seat and flung him angrily against the far wall of the train car. When Cosmo came to his senses, he found that the entire carload of people had fallen silent: a stunned look of shock on every face. The pregnant girl was awake now. She had seen the whole thing. The young couple flinched as Cosmo reached out and gently lifted the girl up and on to the seat.

“*Suwate,*” he said. “Sit.”

She nodded desperately, a look of terror in her eyes. All eyes followed Cosmo as he got off at the next station.

When he got home, Cosmo sat dejectedly on the sofa, stroking his cat. Had he done the right thing? Sure he had . . . Well, maybe not. It had all happened so fast and without any thought that he wasn't quite sure he had really done it at all.

While he was doing it, and immediately after, it had felt good. Really good. In fact, it had been all he could do to keep himself from kicking the salary man after he had bounced off the wall of the train car and was lying in a bewildered state on the floor. Was he, Cosmo, also becoming an Asshole?

Cosmo was more confused than ever. How, he asked himself, does one walk lightly in a cannibal world? He was sure he that, if he listened closely, he could make out, in the back ground, the universal unceasing scream of plants, animals and people that were constantly being crushed and eaten for lunch all around him. Cosmo had no desire to Alpha anyone. At the same time, he absolutely refused to be Alphaed himself. Yet, he was outflanked and out-fanged on all fronts. Cosmo sought desperately to get Bonoboed; he needed a good Bonoboing worse than he ever had at any time in his life. But all he saw around him were bared teeth and slashing incisors. The cannibals ruled. The lovers of this world had all been decisively defeated and driven out on the road to extinction.

Cosmo noticed that the "message" light was flashing on his telephone. He pushed the "replay" button. "You have five new messages," a high, prerecorded female voice informed him.

The first four were recordings of a woman's voice saying, "I don't know what she's saying. She's talking in Japanese," and then an immediate disconnection. His mother's voice calling all the way from Muncie. She still had problems dealing with the voice recording message on Cosmo's phone. The fifth time she managed to get it right.

"Hello, Cosmo, darling. It's mother. I hope this is recording. I never know which button to push. Sorry I missed you. I hope you are taking care of yourself. I will call again later. Be good. I love you, honey. Remember your manners and remember your prayers."

And then a click followed by silence.

Cosmo hung up and went to bed.

Cosmo began to have nightmares every night in which he saw himself hanging from the limb of a drought-stricken tree. All around him the land was parched with dust. Beneath him was a river that was shrinking from evaporation. Soon the river would be dried up and gone. On the far bank stood a tribe of cannibal Chimpanzees howling to drink his blood and devour his entrails.

When he awoke each morning, Cosmo offered up the only prayer to heaven that he still believed in with any faith at all.

"Dear Lord," he prayed, "please deliver me from the Assholes. The rest I can handle by myself."

Excerpt from a novel in progress.

Desperado

by Roy Hernandez

"What dis card cheatting you sum bitch?"

"It ain't no card cheating Bo!"

"Why everytimes we come here to da Wild Oats Saloon in Tombstone, Bo ya.."

"Coz he a dumb sum bitch can't understand dat dis game is about Patterns and.."

"Yeah! Ya see for da umteenth time Bo we lay it out fer you da understand."

"Good-evening gentleman! May I introduce myself and my dear friend. My name is Wyatt Earp and this is my dear friend Doc Holladay and of course over there by the saloon door just watching people as they go about their daily business is my brother Nicholis Earp and Bat Masterson. I just kinda overheard that y'all were having a problem explaining to Bo that card playing is about patterns. Well, what do you think Doc?" Said Wyatt Earp to Doc Holladay as he lit up a cigar.

"Well, Wyatt! This here is what we all, the learned and the ignorant call Poker. Of course it is a card game and yes, one might say it's all about patterns, but, above patterns it's about honesty. If you do not have the heart of honesty then the other fellow might shoot you dead for cheatting and of couse we don't want any of that in Tombstone. No Sir, Poker involves more than just patterns or suits as I would prefer to call them. It really involves a great deal of concentration and skill to beat your opponent or opponents as the case may be here. So, may I have the pleasure to join you men in a game of Poker, and so that Bo there can learn the card game. I suggest that because money and bets being the high factor to tension on who is cheatting and who is not, so that no man get so furious and draw his hidden pistola or Injun knife and kill or wound another man over a game of cards. I propose that I and Mr. Earp sit down with you gentleman and play Poker with you gents with no bets till the sun goes down till you all men learn to play this card game with a bit of concentration and some degree of skill and above all keep the temper down and mellow out and enjoy a game of Poker with honesty in your heart. After all it is just a game and no body wants to see a dead man again here in Tombstone!" Doc Holladay said nicely but firm.

"I couldn't disagree with you any less Doc. That was a mighty fine way of putting the rules all down on that game of patterns, heart of honesty and no cheatting but using concentration and skill to win over one or more opponents and yes the factor of bets with money raises tensions with men so a card cheatter is killed by another man in a rage for card cheatting. I say it's hardly worth the price of playing Poker don't you agree Doc?" Wyatt Earp looked at Doc Holladay.

"Absolutely Wyatt. A card game is to be enjoyed and not...."

"That means, if you men have not seen the sign as you entered Tombstone that no guns, rifles, knives or other weapons are allowed inside of Tombstone. If you are passing through or staying in Tombstone for awhile you had better obey the law of Tombstone and turn in your guns and other weapons into the sherriffs office till you leave Tombstone. So before the rules of the card game of Poker is the rule of no weapons in Tombstone. Is that understood? So if you get drunk and have a misunderstanding about who cheatted who, you both can go out into the street and brawl it out. That I don,t mine if it,s an honest fair man to man fight. It kinda eases your tension the next day when you look at your face in the morning mirror when

your head clears from the intoxicating effect of being plain stupid and drunk. Now, if you gentlemen don't mind. Doc Holladay and I will join you for a game of patterns, cards, poker whatever you want to call it. Let's all without any money betting help out poor Bo to learn this honest relaxing game. Shall we?" Replied Wyatt Earp calmly.

"Well, the first thing Bo and to the rest of you gentleman is to shuffle the cards well so that you get a good mixture within so that your chances of winning might favor you. Next thing you want to do is clockwise give each man a card going around 5 times till each man has 5 cards in his hands in the dealing by the dealer. You got that Bo?" Doc said patting Bo gently on the shoulder.

"Yes Sir, Mr. Holladay I gots dat in me head." replied Bo.

"Okay Bo. Now you're the dealer so shuffle the cards darn good and well till you get that feeling like an instant inspiration that you got a good mixture. Then let someone cut the deck in half and then you put the deck of cards back together Okay?" Doc said calmly then coughing aside into his handkerchief and gulping down a shot of whiskey.

"Yo alrights Mr. Holladay?" Bo said concerned.

"It's just this darn cough, nothing to worry about Bo. So now just deal out the cards clockwise. One card to every player for five times Okay?" Doc said firmly.

"Okay I shuffled dem darn good Mr. Holladay wif insperacion and then I asked Billy to cut da cards and I puts da cards back to one piece and now I am dealing a card to every man clockwise five times." Bo replied.

"You're doing good Bo." Doc took another shot of whiskey and coughed harshly.

"Now every man has got 5 cards in his hands. So the next step is to check your cards and see if you got a good hand like a pattern. Let's say like 3 of a kind or 4 of a kind or say a 10, Jack, Queen...King and Ace. You can also have a pattern like all Hearts or all Diamonds and so forth. Bo can you understand what I mean?" Doc said to Bo.

"Yes em Sir Doc Holladay, I thinks I'm a getting da hang of dis card game." Bo replied nervously.

"Okay! One man at a time. Throw down the cards you don't want and Bo will give you gents the same amount of cards you threw away. Okay Bo you're the dealer." Doc said.

"I throws down 3 cards and give 3 new card Bo?" Jessup told Bo.

"Here a 3 cards fer you Jessup." Bo said honestly.

"I ain't gots nuffen here in dis hand Bo. I'm a gonna fold on this time." Billy said kind of disappointed.

"Give me 4 cards Bo?" Hicks said slamming the cards down on the table.

"Yes sir-ree. 4 new cards for Mista Hicks." Bo dealt out the cards.

"I will throw down 2 cards and give me 2 new ones please Bo?" Docs said kindly and gulped a shot of whiskey.

"Yeap, I gives yo 2 cards Doc Holladay and I throws me down 1 card and give me self 1 card." Bo replied.

"Now! This is the moment where the tension builds up. Everyone eyeballing one another for who has the best hand except for Billy because he fold he is no longer in the game. So now Bo say to the gents, lay down what you got. Of course when you're betting with money you can bluff the opponent. Say it Bo!" Doc winked at Bo.

"OK! Emm Jessup whats you gots?" Bo said to Jessup.

"I gots three of a kinds..kings Bo!" Exclaimed Jessup boldly.

"What yo gots Hicks. Lay em down fer da see." Bo said.

"Well if'n we is playing fer money I ask you da show me yo cards ferst Bo. But since we not playing bets I might as do company wif a pair of duces Bo." Hicks said disappointed.

"Well Bo I guess I fold. I don't have a matching pattern of anything and this is the first time Bo." Doc looked at Bo.

"Okidoki. I gots four of a kind..all Aces!" Bo exclaimed excitedly.

"I thinks Bo cheat he neva win!" Jessup said angrily.

"Jessup what wrong wif Bo...Doc yo thinks Bo cheatted?" Billy asked Doc Holladay.

"I thinks Bo either cheat or gots da hang of da game now!" Hicks exclaimed laughing.

"Does yo think I'm a cheat Doc Holladay?" Bo said bewildered and curiously sad.

"Oh! Why hecks no Bo. You won fair and square. I think you got the patterns down. Now that you know the patterns of cards in your head I bet you're going to win every darn time over these gents cause person to person think they have been cheating you for years...hahaha..." Doc began coughing harshly into his handkerchief and gulp some whiskey.

"Well I am mighty glad I stayed out of this game but I'm in for the next Poker game!" Exclaimed Wyatt Earp.

Meanwhile, Nicholis Earp came over to Wyatt Earp telling him that Desperado whose real name was Juan de Cortez, was galloping his horse straight inside the Wild Oats Saloon at full speed. Bat Masterson moved out of the way while Wyatt Earp sat in his chair with both his pistols drawn waiting for the moment while Nicholis Earp stood at his brothers side. Suddenly a huge horse blasted the doors apart as it entered the saloon. Desperado shot a few rounds from his pistol into the ceiling and then at that moment Wyatt Earp shot the horse dead in the saloon. As the horse fell over Desperado lost his balance fall on top of a table as his pistol fell out of his hand. Bat Masterson had a shotgun pointed at Desperados head and Wyatt Earp walked over to Desperado with Nicholis Earp and said to Desperado.

"Juan de Cortez! Why do you always come into my town, Tombstone and are desperate to cause me trouble. Last time you came through here. You were galloping at full speed drunk as a skunk shooting the dogs in Tombstone. Now you come busting into my saloon with a damn horse shooting your pistola into the ceiling. This saloon needs some repairing so you are going to jail and everyday you will work till this saloon is repaired. By the way your horse is dead. I shot it and I'm gonna have it dragged out of here and trade it to the Indians for free just to keep the peace. I think they kinda love the taste of horse meat and winter is comming. They could use the hide of your once galloping horse. Let's go straight to jail. You know the law of Tombstone, no pistolas and we prefer gents, emm." Wyatt Earp picked up Juan de Cortez and walked him into a jail cell and locked it.

"Okay! But someday ju gon to know why I am called Desparado, sabe Senor Wyatt Earp." Desperado replied excessively staggering drunk.

"You need any help Wyatt." Said Bat Masterson.

"No! Just get that damn dead horse out of the Wild Oats Saloon and give it to the Chief of the Indians, compliments of Sheriff Wyatt Earp and a crazy Mexican call Desperado." Replied Wyatt Earp.

"Senor Earp ju gon to have to buy me new horse right?" Desperado said.

“You know I always thought that a real Desperado was a wild bandido robbing stage coaches, banks and all that gun fighting stuff. You got to stop calling yourself Desperado. Have you ever though about settling down in Tombstone and having a real job?” Wyatt said seriously.

“You pay me money for da real job. Wait! I am Desperado it's my reputation. No! Okay maybe but what kind of job you give to me Senor Earp... serramente por favor?” Replied Desperado.

“Okay! You want to be tough. Then you be my assistant in the Sherriffs office...jail keeper watcher ahh patterns ahh doing cival community work and no more whiskey for you Mexican, just coffee like me. You become loco like Indian with firewater...now get in the jail cell and sleep it off. Me and Bat Masterson are going to the Indian Chief and skin your dead horse... buenas noches amigo.” Wyatt Earp said as he opened the door out of the office.

“Wait Senor Wyatt Earp. What is new job for Desparado called?” Juan de Cotez yelled from his cell.

“Think of it as many things ahh yeah many many ahh Patterns. That's it! Patterns of a normal life and work.. patterns hemm.” Wyatt Earp shut the sherriffs office door and went to get the horse to give to Chief One Feather.

In The Night, She Comes To Me

by Sarah Mulvey

It's when I was asleep that Kellie would visit. It freaked me out in the very beginning, in the first little while after she'd left me. I tried to fend off sleep, drinking coffee into the night, keeping the lights on. There's no soft lighting in Japanese apartments, only fluorescent. Practical, utilitarian. Good for reading. Good for keeping the two-inch cockroaches away. Their shiny maroon bodies scurry the moment I flick on the light switch. I don't go out much. Usually once or twice a week to the twenty-four hour convenience store around the corner for a bag of ground coffee, or a loaf of that sweet spongy dough the Japanese call bread. It's not like I need to turn the light out when I leave. I'm only gone for ten or fifteen minutes max. I guess it's habit.

Anyways, when I get back from my weekly shopping excursion, after climbing the three flights of cement steps to get to my apartment, I give the door a few good kicks before I unlock it, hoping the roaches will take the hint and get out of my sight before I turn on the light. No such luck. They're not going to break up their party until the last possible moment. They wait for the flick of the switch, the crackle of electricity, followed by the three-second flutter of light before the small room is completely flooded with a stark, white glare. Then they run, scattering in all directions into the various cracks and crannies that decorate the baseboards of the four bare walls. Well, bare save for the smudges of black here and there, the outline of the sole of my boot clearly visible. The landlord will have a heyday with those marks, clear evidence that *gaijin* are not only dirty enough to wear their shoes indoor, but they also lack self-control. Kicking walls is the territory of barbarians and Western men. One in the same in the eyes of many, I'm sure.

These one-room apartments weren't made with any kind of thought given to atmosphere or the possible romantic night in, not that that's on the agenda anyway. There's enough space for a roll-up futon, a hot-plate and a bar fridge. There's a shared squat toilet, outside my door and down the hall to the left. It has a pull chain for a flush. The first time I took a dump it took a good ten minutes for me to figure out that the chain dangling above my head wasn't some kind of emergency cord. There was a hand-written sign on the wall, the Japanese squiggles and dots and lines meaning absolutely nothing to me. I hate that I can't read kanji. When I can't read, I assume the words in front of me are some kind of warning, a list of what-not-to-do's. I was quite certain that the sign in the squatter stall said something like; "Do not pull the cord above your head or an incredibly loud and piercing alarm will sound."

The first time I made use of the facilities, I squatted above the hole in the floor with the smell of my own shit for a good long while before I got the courage to pull the cord, closing my eyes, sucking in air and waiting for the worst. When the whoosh of water arrived, I could only shake my head, somewhat confused. There I was, sitting in the middle of the largest city in the industrialized world, squatting like a Neanderthal and yanking on a chain when I needed to take a shit. Go figure. Kellie would have never even given this shithole a moment's consideration.

Kellie never saw this place. Well, not while we were together anyway. I got it a month after she left me. I sold everything from our *Shinjuku* flat. What I couldn't sell, I threw in the

trash. But I guess to say she never saw this place isn't really the case. She sees it every night when she visits me, after I've fallen asleep. I remember the first night it happened. I was in that twilight area between being awake and giving into sleep, when there she was, sitting lotus position on the floor beside my head. That first time, and for at least the next six or seven nights, I really thought I was awake. I reached my hand out instinctively to touch her, waving my fingers in the air, making contact with nothing. Those first few times, my heart would convulse, my body plunging in a freefall and I'd jerk awake, my eyes opening to see nothing except for the sliver of light from the hallway outside peeking under the front door. And I'd tell myself it was just a dream. I'd manage to get back to sleep, only to be awoken yet again, this time by the smell of tea.

Before dawn, before any natural light can make its way through the small square of window above my futon is when I'd get the first faint whiff. I'd force my eyes open, almost expecting Kellie to be standing over me, willing me to get up. But, of course she wouldn't be there. That smell would be, though. Hovering in the air, embedding itself into my pillow and blanket. Earl Grey. And she never drank the stuff, she just always smelled like a cup of Earl Grey tea. I'd mentioned it to her enough times, back when we were together, enough times that it was a game, really. I just liked to hear her say that word. It has such a cool sound. "Bergamot".

If I saw her getting ready to go out, pulling her hair up into some kind of knot on the top of her head, and making trips back and forth from bedroom to bathroom, I knew that scent would soon be filling the air. "Kellie, you brewing a cup? Bring me one too, will ya?" And I'd wait for the answer. The same each time. "John, it's not tea. It's bergamot. Ber-ga-mot!" And she'd usually come and sit on my lap at this point, letting me get a good deep sniff of her neck, her hair. Bergamot.

Kellie's words, Kellie's scent, Kellie. Every night, without fail, she'd find some porthole that connects directly into my head, tapping into all my senses. I felt I was losing my already feeble grip on reality. I started drinking a pot of coffee well past midnight, trying to fend off sleep with caffeine as my weapon. But the cups of coffee could hold me off from sleeping for only so long. Eventually, my eyes had to close and there she would be. Calm, wearing that flowy flowery sari thing I got her when we travelled to Goa. In her nightly visits, she would sit cross-legged on the tatami, inches from where my head would be on the buckwheat pillow. I could feel the breath from her mouth against my face as she spoke to me. Her green eyes would be so close to mine I could count the thirteen gold flecks in the left one. I know there are thirteen. I counted them on our first date, nearly eight years ago. Long before we made our trek to Tokyo.

When the nightly visits began last year, I did doubt that it was happening at all. But, later in the day, as I'd re-hash the previous night's conversation, I knew she had to have been there. It was after about two weeks of nightly visits that I had to give up the premise that I was only having dreams.

I had left the apartment for my regular coffee/bread run when I walked right past the convenience store. I kept walking, criss-crossing the main roads and ending up in an alley hidden from the bright lights and pedestrians of *Shibuya*. I'd never been there, but I felt compelled to walk its length. There were abandoned bicycle carcasses resting against the cement walls of shuttered *izakaya*, their rusty chains and broken spokes the only reminders of

a group of drunken salarymen's night out on the town long ago. I kept walking, and caught the scent of incense in the air. It wasn't Japanese temple incense, the stuff that burns with plumes of smoke cleansing the air for clearer conversations with Buddha. This smell was the heady, Indian stuff. The kind that reminds me of smoking pot back in Vancouver.

The scent caught me and carried me to the end of the alley, to the only open shop. It was one of those ethnic shops young Japanese open after travelling through India for a month. I used to come to these places quite a bit when we first arrived in Japan. The girls who hung out in them tended to like foreign guys. They'd travelled themselves, so their English was usually good enough to carry on a bit of a conversation. Enough to secure a telephone number and a coffee at Mister Donuts' at the very least.

In any case, that's the kind of shop that was at the end of the alley, one hundred percent Indian run by a twenty-year old Japanese. Well, she appeared to be about twenty. But that didn't interest me. That particular urge that had compelled me to pursue young women had all but disappeared. She was standing outside the shop, spraying the front window with blue stuff out of a plastic bottle, wiping the surface in broad, even strokes. When she spotted me out of the corner of her eye, she almost dropped the bottle, letting out a little gasp. She clearly didn't have many customers, and certainly not tall, white guys.

She held one hand up to her mouth, hiding her lips so I could barely hear the inevitable sound of shock and surprise;

"Bikkuri shita!"

She backed up a bit, giving me space to walk through the curtained front door. I bowed, offering an informal thank you;

"Hai, domo."

As soon as I walked into the claustrophobic little shop, I spotted it. A silk, chartreuse scarf, draped over the cash register, its goldthread tassels grazing the floor. The previous night's conversation with Kellie filled my head. She'd been in her usual position, sitting cross-legged by my head when she commented on the sparseness of my room.

"You really ought to smarten this place up a bit. It's depressing."

She was scanning the four walls. I'm sure she was taking in the fact that I hadn't bothered to hang even a music poster since I'd moved in.

"Have you considered buying a floor lamp? Something a little softer than that God awful fluorescent over your head? John, you spend all your days in here, at least make it comfortable."

She looked genuinely concerned as she laid one hand on the wall above my head. She shivered.

"Kellie, if it was comfort I wanted, you can be certain I would've found a place that at least had a toilet that I could sit down on to take a proper shit. Comfort's not a priority at the moment."

She was looking at the ceiling, and then she stood, stretching her arms above her head as far as they would go. Her fingertips practically touched the plastic covering on the overhead light.

"You know, you're tall enough, you could pin some kind of covering up here. A silk scarf would be perfect. Chartreuse to soften the glare."

So, it was while I was standing in a Japanese version of India that I came to the conclusion that I wasn't just dreaming Kellie. Somehow, she was visiting me, talking to me, keeping me company. And it wasn't the fact that I found a chartreuse silk scarf in some obscure shop in *Shibuya*. I do believe in coincidence. Tokyo is full of surprises. I'd seen much stranger things than that unexpected little piece of India in a Japanese back alley. What I do know is my own vocabulary, or rather, the limits of my vocabulary. The combination of silk and chartreuse is just not something I would create on my own. When the previous night's conversation with Kellie came back to me while I was standing in that shop, I had to give up on the idea that what was happening wasn't real. She was visiting me. She was talking to me. She had gotten into my head.

What I'd learned over the past year in these nightly get-togethers with Kellie, is that she wasn't there to discuss the pros and cons of ambient lighting in my Tokyo apartment. That was just the lead-up, the preamble. I'd let that part happen. I'd given up on the late night coffee in order for that part to happen. In fact, I looked forward to unfolding the futon, turning out the overhead light and pulling the covers up and over my head every night. It actually seems a bit odd that I bothered folding up the futon in the first place. Habit, I suppose. A patterned routine I began when I took the real estate agent's words to heart when she showed me this room over a year ago. Seeing I was a foreigner, she let me in on a few secrets of Japanese apartment living. "See this dampness? Touch it."

She had taken her index finger and drawn a line on the one small window in the apartment, leaving a clear, diagonal track through the droplets of water that had collected on its surface. I took her lead and drew a line in the condensation, crossing the one she had already made, creating a large letter X.

"No good for tatami. No good for futon. Open window every day. Shake and fold futon every day. You get mould if you not folding properly."

She made a small fist and rubbed away our artwork from the window with a few broad swipes.

"You stay in Japan now long time? I help if you need assistance. This is my personal card. You call. Even if not taking apartment, I help you."

She handed me her card, smiling. Even though she was bowing slightly, she didn't let her eyes leave mine.

Had this been before Kellie had gone, I would have had that real estate agent in bed before the week was through. If it had been a worthwhile fuck, I would have held onto her card until we had at least one more session. And then that handy little name card, with its cell phone number and colourful Hello Kitty-chan sticker or print club photo would have been torn into bits and thrown into the trash. Tokyo's a big city. I'd never see her again.

But, this all happened after Kellie had left me, so the real estate agent's card was thrown into the trash immediately. Her number never dialed, her heart never broken. I'm aware of the irony. I choose not to dwell on it. The only action that small apartment would witness was the dance the cockroaches would put on when I left to stock up on bread and coffee. In any case, I may have thrown out the name card, but I did hold onto the advice. Every morning when I woke up, head still full of Kellie thoughts and the smell of Earl Grey hanging in the air, I'd fold my futon, store it in the closet, and open the window. Habit.

I suppose Kellie's nightly visits became habit over time as well. But then, some small changes in our routine began to take place. I could feel it buzzing in the air around us as she tried to direct the conversation away from our regular safe topics of food, friends from home and college stories and into uncomfortable territory, relationship stuff.

When this started happening with more regularity, I made a deal with myself. I decided that when Kellie wanted to get into the deeper stuff, the stuff that made her leave me, I'd force myself to wake up. Stand up. Flick on the awful overhead light. Take a walk down the hall to the squatter. Hang out there until I was sure she was gone. And I could do it at first. Open my eyes at will, shake the Kellie residue from the air and crawl back onto the futon to get some sleep.

But, over time, it began to get more and more difficult to control. Usually, I knew exactly when to kick in the eye-open reflex. It was when the conversation was approaching that point where she would want to stop the small talk, and she'd really be looking at me. Her eyebrows raised, cocked in a way that I knew so well. And I would notice that it wasn't just a certain sadness shading her eyes and forcing the corners of her mouth to twitch slightly. There was weariness there, too. And resignation. Those weren't the eyes of someone who was about to cry. They were the eyes of someone who had given up on crying. Her lips would be pursed, drawn so tightly so that the colour would be pink bordering-on-white rather than the usual red.

It would be at this part of her nightly visit that I knew she wanted to talk. Really talk. And that word would come to mind. Closure. I'm not into that kind of stuff. I don't blame Kellie for needing this, though. I blame all those bloody daytime talk show people. They created the idea of closure to boost ratings. I have a feeling I'm not the only man on the planet who's not a fan of closure. Kellie's need for it proved to be very strong, so strong in fact, that last week, I lost the ability to control her visits.

We'd been getting along just fine, talking about one of our friends in Vancouver, and then she just stopped, mid-sentence, and gave me that look. The whole vibe changed. She was going to tread in that area. I wanted to just leave it be.

"John? We need to talk about why ..."

It was starting, so I turned off. I zoned her out and told myself to open my eyes.

"John? You've got to address it, you know. It won't just go away."

My eyes simply would not open. Her face, her eyes, her smell, were washing over me, but it wasn't in the gentle, soothing way I'd grown accustomed to this past year. I was suffocating in Kellie. I couldn't breathe. I started grabbing at my throat, curling up in a ball on the futon.

"John. You're overreacting. I'm not leaving this time. You have to calm down now."

She stood up and turned on the overhead light. She'd never done anything quite so prosaic since she had started her visits. It made her that much more real. And it scared the shit out of me. What the hell was going on? I caught my breath and sat up on the futon. She knelt down beside me, her eyes looking directly into mine. Green and gold.

"You've got to get out of here John. It's been a year. You've got to do something."

She really wasn't going anywhere. As far as I could tell, my eyes were now indeed wide open, the overhead fluorescent was burning brighter than ever and she was still in front of

me. So, I did it. What she wanted me to do. I finally posed the question I had never had the chance to ask.

“Why did you leave me?” I couldn’t look at her. I was knotting the blanket between my fists, tugging and pulling, wanting to look at her, but no able to. She took a few moments to answer, but when she did, she was calm, composed.

“John, when we decided to come here, it had been my decision. I thought we could stay a couple of years, learn a bit of Japanese, and save a tonne of money. We’d go back to Vancouver, open a record shop, and live happily-ever-after.”

I looked up at her. She wasn’t angry or accusatory. Just matter-of-fact.

“We could’ve still tried that you know. I just needed more time.”

She was already shaking her head before I’d finished the sentence.

“Five years was too long. I was ready after two. You said one more. I agreed. And then it all went to hell. You became that guy. That guy, the puppet foreigner. While you were in the spotlight, the white superstar, I took a few steps back. I studied Japanese. I tried to ignore what was going on right under my nose. It was killing me.”

She looked directly at me and took a breath before she spoke again.

“John, Japan was killing me.”

We were both silent after that. I wanted to say that I was aware of what was going on for her back then. But I would’ve been lying. She was right. Japan had been her decision. She’d made all the plans, and I’d been the somewhat reluctant partner. But then Japan shocked and surprised me at every turn. People wanted to talk to me wherever I went. They would approach me to help them with English. Strangers I had met at bus stops were taking me out to dinner. Girls stared at me, whispering as I walked by. By the look in their eyes, I knew they were saying good things. Two years wasn’t enough.

A door slamming somewhere down the hall outside the apartment door broke the silence. Kellie continued.

“John, I know you always thought of me as strong. Independent. Outspoken. But those things just didn’t work here for me. Square peg, round hole. Doesn’t work. Japan was a playground for you and a daily struggle for me.”

She’d been calm up until those last words. I could see in the small twitch in her bottom lip and the shine in her eyes that suppressing her emotion was getting the best of her. It was in here next words that her voice betrayed her. She paused, composed herself, and continued.

“When I said I wanted to go home, I knew you resented me even being here.”

That last sentence hung in the air, heavy and dark above us as we faced each other. We both knew it was true. In fact, after the third year, I had suggested she go back to Vancouver and set up the groundwork for the record shop. I’d stay in Japan and make another year’s worth of money. When I’d made that suggestion, any bit of the Kellie that I knew before we’d left for Japan was rubbed out completely. She’d found enough Hello Kitty name cards in my trouser pockets to know I wouldn’t be alone if she were to go back to Vancouver first.

We should have left together at that point. I think I knew that all along, I just didn’t want to acknowledge it. I know now that the day I decided to milk another year out of Japan our fate was sealed.

“John? Can we do this?”

I could hear the concern in her voice. I was lying on my back, stretched out fully on the futon, staring directly into the overhead light. It was burning my eyes, but I couldn't look away.

"John. Let's finish this. It's been a year. You've got to let it go."

Fucking closure. Those were the only words that were coming to my mind.

"John. You've got to stop saying I left you. I didn't leave. Not in the way you're saying it."

I rolled over on my side at this point. I wanted to look at her. I had a feeling she wouldn't be sticking around much longer. I'd been staring at the light for so long, though, I couldn't get Kellie's face into focus. The whole room was glowing.

"Say it. I didn't leave you." Her voice had taken on a different tone. She wasn't angry, but she wasn't exactly exuding warmth either. It was her no bullshit tone.

"Look. I was working through some things. I didn't realize how unhappy you were. And then you didn't give me a chance to find out. You just left."

I knew that's exactly what she didn't want to hear. I was being pigheaded.

"Say it. I didn't leave. John? Say it."

I took a breath. And then I said it.

"You didn't leave."

The room was coming into focus. I could see Kellie's face. The smile lines around her eyes had returned, her lips were smooth and red, nearly curled into a smile.

"John, you're almost there. You're right. I didn't leave. What did I do?"

"Kellie, is this really necessary?"

I was sitting up at this point. I wanted to hold her hand, touch her cheek. But I knew that was off-limits.

"You've spent a year in limbo John. Get off your ass. What did I do?"

No-nonsense, no muss, no fuss. And out it came.

"You died. You ate a bunch of pills, and you died."

The room looked the same. Kellie was still there, her head cocked slightly to the side. I think she was concerned about what I would do next. I was exhausted.

"Are you okay?"

The truth was, as spent as I felt, I did feel better. I wasn't sure what word to use to explain.

"I feel... lighter."

"Good. That's the whole idea."

She was starting to stand up, straightening out the folds in the sari so that it was draped around her from her shoulders to her toes. Could she really be leaving now? It was too abrupt.

"John, I've got to go. And you've got to get off your ass. Get a bloody job and stop eating that shitty white bread. You say you're feeling lighter but you're actually getting kind of fat."

She was smiling. She was the old Kellie, the pre-Tokyo Kellie. I didn't want her to go quite yet. Now that she got me started, I wanted to talk some more. She went over to the light switch and turned it off. She wasn't going to let me get the last word. The room was pitch black in contrast to the fluorescent. I could only see floating spots in front of my eyes.

“Go on. Get under the covers. I won’t leave until you’re asleep.”

Her voice was closer than I’d thought. She must have been right by my head. My eyes were getting heavy and I could feel her warm breath against my ear. For the first time since Kellie had left, since she had died, I cried. And she stayed beside me the whole time. I don’t know how long the tears lasted. I fell asleep while it was still dark. When I woke up, she was gone, of course. But, the smell of bergamot was still heavy in the air.

My Father-in-law and Funerals

by Ernest Schaal

My father-in-law doesn't go to funerals any more. He used to, but he stopped. He also doesn't go to graveyards, or crematoriums, or anyplace else where there may be dead people. His reason for this is that the dead give him headaches.

When my wife told me this, she stated it as a fact, not questioning its validity. I don't know if it is true or not, but I am no longer so eager to dismiss such talk as mere nonsense.

When I was a teenager, I emphatically believed that there were no ghosts. I thought that anyone believing in them belonged back in the Middle Ages, when people burned witches and thought that the Sun revolved around the Earth.

I figured that if ghosts really existed, some physical evidence of their existence would have already been discovered, measured, and verified. The absence of that evidence convinced me that ghosts were merely figments of people's imagination, encouraged by horror films and stories told around campfires.

In college, I earned two science degrees and discovered that some of the things that I learned in high school were not quite accurate. For instance, some of Newton's laws are not valid as particles approach the speed of light. Also, atoms don't merely contain just the three basic elements I learned in high school: protons, electrons, and neutrons. They also contain quarks and other things. These discoveries didn't shake my belief in science. They simply showed that science isn't as simple as what they taught in high school physics. It is a lot more complicated, and full of uncertainty.

This uncertainty is shown in the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle: which states that the uncertainty in the position of a particle, times the uncertainty in its speed, is always greater than a quantity called Planck's constant, divided by the mass of the particle. In other words, even in the best of all possible circumstances, there is a physical limit to what we can know.

In the following years, as a graduate student, as a research engineer, and then as a patent attorney, I learned more and more about those uncertainties. There is so much that we don't understand, partly because we cannot perceive it and partly because we cannot measure it.

As a patent attorney, my favorite patent was U.S. Patent No. 5,040,414 that was possible only because of improvements of instrumentation and the ability to see patterns in what otherwise would be considered instrument noise. It was for a method for determining a component of a response of a reservoir to tidal forces. Basically it involved measuring over time a variable (such as pressure) that is responsive to the tidal forces within the reservoir, determining the theoretical earth-tide values for the same time period, and comparing the actual measurements with the predicted values to determine components of that response to tidal forces. Those components can be used to help determine a host of things, like the quantity of oil in a reservoir or whether or not two reservoirs are connected.

What was really cool about this invention is that valuable information is found by looking for patterns in what otherwise would be considered noise in measurements. Of course, it is important to know what to look for.

In 1989, when that patent application was filed, it was a major change in the paradigm of how to explore for oil, but it was something that wasn't even possible ten years earlier,

because earlier there wasn't a way to make measurements precise enough to see those variations in the response to tidal forces.

Despite what I emphatically believed in high school, I now wonder if we have the instrumentation necessary to measure whether or not ghosts exist. More importantly, I wonder if we even know what to measure. Even if we knew what to measure and had the necessary instrumentation, I wonder if we would be able to recognize the necessary patterns in the noise of instrumentation.

I don't necessarily believe in ghosts, but I don't disbelieve either. I realize that the absence of scientific proof of their existence is not proof of their nonexistence. I lack the certainty of my beliefs that I had as a youth, not only because I now know the limitations of our scientific understanding, but also because I know of some antidotal evidence from people I trust.

For instance, there is an American professor I know in Nagoya who lived in a house haunted by a beautiful Japanese woman. Visitors to his house had noticed the ghost long before he did, and it had scared off some of his lady friends. He told me that after moving away to a bigger house, he missed her because he felt she was protecting him.

And then, there is an American lawyer I know living in Mexico whose dead mother sometimes visited her.

And then, there is my father-in-law. He started sensing the dead after he had spiritual training to combat arthritis. The training cured the arthritis, but it left him sensitive to the presence of the dead. The dead apparently realized that he could sense their presence, so they started nagging him to do things for them, and their nagging gave him headaches.

Often he didn't know what they wanted, but in one case he was pretty sure he did. After her death, his sister wanted him to get her children to honor her wishes on the inheritance of her estate, but he didn't want to get involved in family squabbles, so she nagged.

I don't think I have personally ever seen or felt a spirit of the dead, but then I don't know if I would have recognized it if I did. I am not sensitive to that type of thing. On the other hand, my father-in-law is. He knows that there are spirits of the dead, because they nag.

Poetry

Hokusai's Peaks

by Chris Gladden

Hokusai
the unrivaled master
of woodblock print lived his
later years in Shinshu
Old Nagano
Enshrined by the lofty ranges
that have always set
wanderers to dream

Each morning post ablutions
and incense laden rounds of
prayer he'd set out and beat
the dusty paths into the
upland abode of the gods

One afternoon as the landscape swept his
wakeful heart he perceived the hills
alive in his breast, swelling with the breath
to crest on snowy summits in that space
just before exhalation where all stands still.
Breath flowed out and
the mountains curled and
fell thunderously into dust.

He wandered home
the old imperative
inside singing

That evening the peaks
still rolling in his chest
he sat at his bench
raised his brush
and painted waves

Cypruss

by Roy Hernandez

The wind of the whirl of time that changed Patterns,
The everlasting to the last gust of ravage.
Where once mighty ships sailed to port.
It was no more than a mere dream of merchants,
And the commerce that brought all harmony.
When the religious festives brought war and ravage.
Music danced with the Lute of Jubilation.
So long as there was celebration there was the salt of poetry,
That sang the weary nights away.
In the drunkenness of illussions and prophetic dreams,
And the unrest and unstability grew slaughtingly wars and rape.
The mixture of cultures and races that came to conquer and dominate.
Violence and vampire images railed and nailed its horns.
Where could freedom be found in the mist of Cypruss.
Swords slashed and cut bodies of chest and bones,
While maidens were seduced the lore and gave offspring of radicals.
Where could there be peace and government,
While religion gave no forbearance nor compassion to the poor.
All men had to surrender submission to the one and only unseen prophet vision God.
For they all bowed and prayed for the forgiveness of their past transgressions.
Where in due time they would all be judged in the pattern winds of Cypruss.

Haiku Photos

by Joe Kashi



Lonely Road

Without home or friends -
Only a lonely road and
sad radio song



Scud Running

Lost plane, winter's fog;
Somewhere below lies safety,
but where's the runway?

Things I Usually Do

by Ohm Miyamura

To look for my hat while wearing it

Or to ask where my glasses are with the glasses on

To take no notice of pretty flowers on the side of my usual road

But to notice I really loved the person after breaking up with the person

To take the change and leave the goods behind

To fail to get off at the station I'm suppose to get off

And to sleep past the station again on the way to return

To fuss about the machine that looks broken while the fact is that it's plugged off

The door that cannot open however hard I push

Incidentally opens when I pull it

To find myself at home after waking up from a dream

Of not getting home however hard I walk my legs

To find my rewritten answers shouldn't have been rewritten

To run around and around under the huge blue sky

To suddenly appreciate fresh water after experiencing a flood

Not to be able to remember the valuables which

I put away too carefully

Or

To find it unexpectedly

Or while thinking to myself, "I should remember this place"

To forget it again

To forget to drink the tea I made for myself

To be unable to recall the name of an important person

Though I can clearly remember trifling matters about the person

To wish I could do it over like the phrase "I mean..."

Which my teachers used to use so often in the graduation ceremony

But after all, as usual,

And however old I become

I can't figure out what the most important things are

いつものこと

みやむら おうむ

帽子を被ったまま
帽子を捜し
眼鏡を掛けたまま
眼鏡はどこだと言い
いつもの通い道に咲いた花に気付かず
別れた後で好きだったと気がついたり
お釣りだけ受け取っては肝心なものを忘れ
目的地の駅を乗り過ごして
後戻りの最中に又寝過ごしたり
電源を抜いたままの機械が壊れたと騒ぎ
押しても押しても開かぬドアが
引いてみたら開いたり
歩いても歩いても
目の前にある自分の家に辿り着けない夢から
醒めたらいつもの自宅だったとか
書き直して提出した答案の
訂正前が正解だったり
大空の下で忙しそうに動き回り
大雨の後で真水が有り難く思えたり
大切にしまい過ぎて貴重品の場所が分からなくなったり
かと言えば
思わぬ時にそれが出て来たり
この場所を憶えておかねばと思いながら
又その場所を忘れたり
自分で煎れたお茶を飲み忘れたり
大切な人の名前を思い出せず
くだらないことだけは憶えていたり
卒業式で先生がよく言った「モトイ」のように
やり直せたらと思いながら
いつものとおり

大切なことが何なのか
何歳になっても分からない
いつものこと

Aren't Cherry trees

by Albert Sussler

Aren't Cherry trees
things of beauty,
poems of soft pink petals,
makers of shade.
blockers of wind
Between the beach,
and the bamboo hills
A piece of land
west side stand
two beautiful cherry trees,
by the senior center.

With beams and posts
we built our house
two trees stood firm
no branch disturbed
when our house was finished
we stood and gazed beside
a blaze of blossom pink.

Life goes on
my children grow tall
but the trees grow taller.
Over the years people pass
some show kindness
some show apathy
Some show subtle hostility

One winter day,
not but a few sleeps past,
cutting sounds hit my ears
Looking out to see
the two cherry tree
branch by branch
being amputated.

Gardener!
What do you do with
these cherry trees
I am cutting them down.'

Seeing concern in my eyes
a limbless trunk
He comes climbing down

Several village elders
sit inside the senior's center
One I knew the Kocho

He says to me
Was it not you, who asked
to have them cut down.
No I cry. it was not I
How could anyone destroy such splendor.

the gardener stops his blade
the rest of the day
stands quiet those two trees..
An old woman passed
gives thanks for stopping the slash.

I tell my children, the cherry trees lost limbs today.
so old women, won't need to sweep
for no leaves fall from limbless trees.

a granny has been telling neighbors,
'it was that gaijin who wanted the cherry trees down.'

Next morning voices gather
twenty members strong
seniors all
they have come to cut the cherry down.

Saw against branches
the blade runs though
I shout , Yameru

The old woman growled, '
They drop leaves don't you see,
that one must sweep.
They harbors bugs that are a mess
no tree is best.

My mind reflects,
some old folks lose hair
some have lice,
following your words
are they to be cut down too

The head of the Seniors group declares,
the trees must go,
for at our meeting it was decided.

Tears ran down my cheeks
I shook with rage.
What logic is this...
Decided

Yet something changed.
Like a break in the rain
darkness recedes .
my view has taken hold.
for destruction has ceased

The granny's voice breaks the silence
'We'll be back to finish what
should have been done this
day.'

How long the trees stand
next to our house I dare not say.
I pray their chance once again

To reach for the sun.
to spread their branches
to shade our lives.
Aren't Cherry trees
things of beauty,
poems of soft pink petals,
makers of shade.
blockers of wind

The 100 Yen Cup

by Albert Sussler

I was sitting at my stand at the Tokoname ceramic festival minding my business, when this young mother type approached me. Her eyes swept over my show of cups and plates. Finally they settled on one of my cups. She lifted it up and said > '100.'

I asked her, 100 what?

>I want this cup for 100 yen.

I asked, why?

She looked into my eyes and said> 'that is how much a cup costs at a 100 yen shop.'

You want to buy my ceramic handmade cup for 100 yen?

>Yes, that is what I will pay. she answered.

I smiled at her. But inside my stomach was churning...

What goes into that cup, is not just your coffee or tea.

Do you really think the value of a cup is 100 yen?

This cup is made from my sweat.

Sweat from twenty plus years of working with clay.

Clay that I drove from Seto to my studio, that took half the day.

Days, weeks years of study under many teachers each with there own specialty. Some taught me how to find the clay. Some taught me how to throw the clay on the wheel. Some taught me what makes a good cup.

Some taught me how to prepare glazes.

Some taught me how to fire my clay.

I watched and listened and just as important I practiced for years.

Little by little adding to that knowledge with my own experiences and taste to create my own way.

You say... 100 yen.

To make that cup I need to buy clay since I can't just go into the mountains and collect it at night. All right, I have done that, but only because the clay was call me. I must kneed that mud of potential , throw it on the wheel and form that vessel. It takes years to get just the right feel to persuade that mud to stand. You should try it some day.

That cup needs a foot trim after a day of a little drying. Then I dry it the rest of the way. Need to do that slowly, don't want to rush. Cups will crack under pressure.

I fire it low. I glaze it. I fire it high. That cup cools and is ready for your hand .

You see it here but you don't see the many who didn't pull through.

Some crack as they shrink or blister under the heat. This morning three crashed at my feet.

If my cup holds together through the shocks of my studio, I can bring it to market, or try, as many shops don't want to deal with my cups these day. Some are kind and even helpful. Others treat my work as unwanted trash. For that is what it is to them if it doesn't sell.

You may wonder how do I get enough to eat.
And wonder what is left for the roof over my head.
But I guess you don't.

What you want is a cup from a sweat shop in China..
A place where they pay their workers 30 yen an hour.
A place where once hired they toil until, they become too feeble to work,
A place where injuries are left on the floor to crawl away.
A place where they do not care if the lead from their glaze
flows in to the drinking water

If this is what you want, then go and buy your 100 yen cup at your 100 yen shop. Then when you drink from that vessel,
Try to forget, that cup that holds your tea,
is made from a mix of starvation wages, toxic waste and corporate greed.

Once cups were made by independent local craftsmen like me.
Your 100 yen cup is killing them,
one by one.